

Georgia Department of Human Resources

OFFICE OF ADOPTIONS

The Office of Adoptions was created January 1, 1997 to streamline the state's adoption program and to increase the rate of adoptions for children who meet the Department of Human Resources' definition of children with special needs and who are in the state's permanent custody. Children who meet the definition of special needs for the purpose of adoption include any child 8 years of age or older; any child of African-American heritage 1 year of age or older; members of a sibling group of two (2) to be placed together where one is age 8 or over or has another special need as defined herein; any child with a documented physical, psychological or learning disability. Most children in DHR's custody awaiting adoption meet the definition of special needs for the purpose of adoption. In addition, the Office of Adoptions administers the Adoption Assistance and Post Adoption services for adopted families. In collaboration with the Office of Adoptions, county Departments of Family and Children Services prepare home studies, document cases, approve adoptive homes, prepare children and parents for adoption, and place children in adoptive homes.

The Office of Adoptions' FY 2003 budget for administration was \$12.1 million. The budget for Adoption Assistance (financial assistance for adoptive parents of children with special needs) was \$46 million for FY 2003.

Children needing adoption

Presently, 2,366 children are in the legal custody of DHR with a permanency plan of adoption. In FY 2003, approximately 82 percent of the children adopted through the state program were adopted by foster parents, foster/adoptive parents or relatives. Approximately 242 children identified as having special needs do not have an adoptive family. Various child specific recruitment events sponsored through the Office of Adoptions regularly feature this group of waiting children. These events include videoconferences, Wednesday's Child programs, galas, and matching meetings.

Privatization and post adoption services

The Office of Adoptions has increased the role of licensed private agencies in arranging adoptions for children who are in the custody of the state. Other adoption functions such as completing children's life histories, managing the Adoption Reunion Registry, and coordinating the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) and post adoption services have also been privatized. Currently, the Office of Adoptions has 36 contracts with licensed non-profit and for profit agencies. These agencies provide services such as recruiting of foster to adopt and adoption homes, conducting home studies, preparing families to adopt, and supervising adoption placements. The post adoption services programs include but are not limited to: respite care, crisis intervention, support groups for teens, training and support services for parents, and tutoring.

The Office of Adoptions also contracts with My Turn Now, Inc., a non-profit organization, to publish a book of photographs and descriptions of children who are in need of an adoptive home. Furthermore, this agency maintains an electronic photolisting for the Office of Adoptions' web site and registers children on the national photolisting web site.

Office of Adoptions web site

The Office of Adoptions web site (www.adoptions.dhr.state.ga.us) features children in the custody of the state who are in need of an adoptive home. In addition to photolisting and/or videostreaming, the site includes a personal profile of each child. In addition, the site provides answers to questions concerning adoption, links to related sites, and highlights upcoming events for the adoption and foster/adopt communities.